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ABSTRACT

Project Apple Core (Adult Performance Level), a 15-month project funded through Section 309 of the Adult Education Act of 1966, was carried out in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, to provide a career-oriented instructional program for undereducated and underemployed adults in that area. The document briefly describes some aspects of the project, in which employers, administrators, and supervisors identified undereducated employed adults, and instructional programs for them were implemented in a hospital, a packing plant, a Union, and a city public works department. Individual prescription programs for each student were developed, based upon: (1) a survey identifying necessary levels of competency, (2) supervisor interviews to identify each employee's specific academic weaknesses, (3) employee interviews to determine their specific interests, and (4) site visits. Paraprofessionals were hired, career-oriented math and reading curricula were developed, and instructional materials were compiled into instructional packets in the areas of Health Services, Private Industry, and Municipal Service. Communication between the agency and the supervisors provided feedback. An annotated bibliography was compiled, a dissemination conference held, and a slide presentation developed and shown for promotion, training, and recruitment. Sizeable gains were produced in educational levels among participants. The document does not contain the bibliography or the instructional packets. (AJ)

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# ANNUAL REPORT

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PROJECT APPLE CORE

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Project Apple Core (A P P L E C O R E) was a fifteen month project funded through Section 309 of the Adult Education Act of 1966 to the Louisiana State Department of Education. The project was carried out in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana. The major purpose of the project was to provide an innovative career-oriented instructional program to meet the needs of the undereducated and underemployed adults in the Lafayette area. Findings of the APL Project suggest that the ability to use skills and obtain knowledge necessary to meet the requirements of today's working world are probably the most important determiners of economic success among adults. Apple Core was designed to try to determine which of these skills were important to employers and to develop specialized materials which could provide purposeful educational opportunities for the workers in Lafayette Parish.

One of the major tasks of Project Apple Core was to identify and locate undereducated adults who are employed but lack the academic and occupational skills needed to advance in employment. The educational program of the project addressed itself to the problem by providing individualized career-oriented instruction based on the occupational deficiencies as stated by their employers and the academic deficiencies as determined by standardized tests and/or informal diagnostic tests designed by the project staff.

In order to locate potential participants, the project staff

contacted public and private agency administrators, public and private employers, and personnel directors of various institutions. After presenting the information concerning the project and establishing release time agreements, the staff initiated instructional programs at Charity Hospital, B. F. Trappey's Sons Packing Plant, Laborers International Union of North America and the City of Lafayette's Public Works Department.

In order to accomplish the project's objectives, the following activities were implemented:

1) A survey was conducted to identify levels of competency needed by the undereducated employees in certain areas of employment with relation to occupational awareness, orientation, the ability to seek employment, factors related to retaining employment and advancement of employment.
2) Interviews with employees' immediate supervisors were conducted to identify specific academic weaknesses of each employee.
3) Individual interviews were made with each participant in order to determine specific educational, vocational, and avocational interests.
4) Results of the APL study were analyzed and a site visit was made to determine how the findings could be incorporated into the project.
5) Based upon the survey and interviews, individual prescription programs for each student were developed by the staff in cooperation with reading and math consultants from the University of Southwestern Louisiana as part of the

employees' instructional program.

6) Paraprofessionals with a background in reading from the University of Southwestern Louisiana were hired to help with the instructional program.

7) Materials were gathered during the course of the instructional program and used to develop career-oriented curricula in the areas of math and reading. This material was compiled in Instructional Packets in the areas of Health Services, Private Industry, and Municipal Service. (See accompanying guides.)

8) Adult Career Education material was reviewed and an annotated bibliography was compiled. (See accompanying guides.)

9) A dissemination conference was held at the University of Southwestern Louisiana for participants from the State of Louisiana and Region VI.

10) Constant communication, both verbal and written, were maintained between the agency administrator and supervisor to report participants' progress, not only concerning his instructional program, but feedback from the supervisors as to possible improvements on the job.

11) A slide presentation was developed for promotional and training purposes, and was presented at numerous state, regional and national conferences and training workshops. The presentation is also used in the community to help recruit potential participants.

## SUPERVISOR INTERVIEWS

Interviews with immediate supervisors provided important information about each worker which helped in the preparation of individual learning prescriptions. Information concerning specific academic weaknesses and/or specific skills which could improve job performance or advancement opportunities was obtained for each participant.

Supervisors showed much concern over the ability of workers to read and fill out job related forms such as equipment maintenance checklists, time sheets, leave forms, and repair orders. Many weaknesses were discussed for particular workers in each job area but the academic skills required usually boiled down to basic communication and computational skills.

In many instances supervisors singled out particular employees who were very diligent and capable workers but could not be promoted because of academic weaknesses. Other workers were locked into positions because of the inability to pass tests such as civil service examinations. With the cooperation of these supervisors, learning prescriptions for such varied skills as mechanical aptitude, safety practices, blueprint reading, and equipment operation were developed.

Most supervisors were enthusiastic about helping workers improve themselves and some even set the example by participating and acquiring their high school diploma. A small percentage of supervisors, particularly those with a limited education, tended to be reserved and uncooperative; perhaps, because they felt threatened by

subordinates who could become more capable of performing the supervisory job.

The interviews helped develop a rapport between the instructor, worker, and supervisor which was very beneficial and improved the relevance of the educational program provided by Project Apple Core.

## RECRUITMENT SURVEY

Each participant was given a recruiting interview to obtain information which would be considered when developing the prescription. The recruiting surveys enabled the instructor to become familiar with each worker's personal background.

Job related information was gathered to determine the length of time on the job, brief job descriptions and to some extent, the degree of satisfaction with their present job. Opportunities for advancement were discussed and workers were made aware of the possibilities which are available with increased educational competence. Job goals for each participant were determined and instructors advised the workers about specific educational skills which would help them attain their particular goals.

Participants were also questioned about avocational interests. This information was used to help relate the prescription to familiar areas of interests and enrich the individual learning programs. In some cases workers were encouraged to pursue certain avocational interests because of the career possibilities.

Brief reading and mathematics inventories were administered at the time of the interview. Knowing approximate functional levels for each student proved to be a great asset when preparing to commence classes.

The interview also provided time for participants to ask questions about the project and other educational or vocational

programs which were available. The one to one relationship at the interview, although informal, set the ground work for the instructor and helped establish the idea that Project Apple Core was independent of previous company programs and that Apple Core personnel were conducting classes to help workers improve themselves academically.

ADULT PERFORMANCE LEVEL SITE VISIT

Copies of the APL inventory and other materials were obtained by the project staff. Results of the APL survey were closely scrutinized and all of the related tasks were evaluated for possible use in developing curricula for Apple Core participants.

Many of the APL tasks rephrased in the context of occupational improvement provided the backbone for the educational program offered by Project Apple Core. Tasks in the Occupational Knowledge area were found to be related more to obtaining rather than retaining or advancing in employment and were incorporated into the introductory phase of Apple Core which helped establish communication between workers by role playing certain situations. Selected tasks in the other areas; Health, Government and Law, Consumer Education and Community Resources were incorporated into the prescriptions of particular individuals as requisite skills for achieving occupational goals.

Project participants were grouped into four levels ranging as follows: total illiterates--L1, marginal illiterates--L2, functional illiterates--L3, and those with skills beyond functional literacy--L4. In keeping with APL findings, most participants with low literacy levels--L1, L2 tended to hold entry level jobs with low pay scales even with 10 to 15 years of longevity on the jobs.

Information obtained from the APL Project by the project staff provided invaluable assistance in establishing the educational program.

With this information, Project Apple Core eliminated the problem of determining fundamental statistics and the multitude of tasks which must be considered by any program trying to improve literacy levels of individuals.

## PRESCRIPTIVE INSTRUCTION

Individualized prescriptions were developed for each participant because of the amalgamation of backgrounds of workers which demanded the flexibility and effectiveness of an instructional program that could be molded to suit each employee's specific needs. With this concern in mind, the project sought ways to increase the reading, writing, and mathematical ability of functionally illiterate adults while trying to increase opportunities for job mobility and advancement.

In order to initiate a program which would be appropriate for a significant group of "hard core uneducated adults" who are traditionally "untouched" because of their reluctance to attend adult education programs in school settings, standardized tests, and automatically dispensed teaching instruments were set aside. A battery of informal tests were developed by the staff and were individually administered. The tests were constructed from material obtained from the survey of employers and certain commercial material. This informal assessment attempted to evaluate only the basic skills and approximate level of each participant. Copies and explanations of the informal inventories are included in Booklet 7 of the Dissemination Packet. Those participants who were found to function at a higher level were administered the C.A.T.; others were tested using more comprehensive informal inventories. Once the academic deficiencies for each individual were identified, a program of instruction was developed encompassing all facets

of the employees' needs. Continuous informal evaluation was considered an essential part of the instructional program and the prescription was subject to change when necessary.

Prescriptions varied greatly from individual to individual; but generally, workers needed to improve on the ability to interpret and complete job related forms and calculate practical related problems.

The prescriptions were applied individually to allow for different rates of progress and were revised periodically because of changing needs and goals. Materials of instruction were gathered on the job and programmed studies were used when applicable as supplementary material.

The format used for the instructional program included: testing, preparation of the prescription, application of the prescription, continual evaluation and revision, and final inventories to determine if any progress was realized. The dual goal of the instructional program provided instruction which was prescriptive and personalized for both academic and occupational skill improvement.

## PARAPROFESSIONALS

Much help was needed to provide individual attention in classes with sometimes 25-30 workers, half of which were practically illiterate. Senior students at the local university with reading instruction backgrounds were utilized by the Project to provide the individual attention, immediate reinforcement and feedback demanded by illiterates.

Prior to the instructional phase of the project, in-service training was conducted to orient the paraprofessionals to the process of andragogy and to suggest activities which had proven successful in attempting to cope with the variety of specialized interests and needs of illiterate workers.

Consultants from the university explained how to implement an instructional program utilizing materials collected from various jobs environments and provided materials and indices of materials for use in career related instruction.

With this information, the paraprofessional adapted readily to the process of teaching career related academic skills. The paraprofessionals were indispensible to conducting organized, meaningful class sessions and were the major factor in the improvement of literacy levels among many participants.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PACKETS

Academic and occupational skills selected from the employer survey, the APL study, and needs of various employees were collected by the project staff. Instructional packets designed to improve these skills were developed and incorporated into individual prescriptions which attempted to correlate academic subject areas to specific job requirements. The format used for developing instructional packets includes sections on objectives, instructional activities, materials, and suggested instructional procedures needed to develop required proficiencies.

In the area of mathematics, a Prescriptive Index Card (PIC) system was developed. The PIC system developed lists suggested career related exercises for basic math skills as well as APL's recommended skills list including consumer economics, health, government and law, community resources and occupational knowledge. In the reading area, packets were developed for teaching word attack, comprehension, study skills, and other skills necessary to improve functional reading skills. Various commercial materials designed especially for adults were also utilized for instructional purposes. Preliminary material was field tested in a pilot instructional class session.

Copies of instructional packets are included in separate Dissemination Bulletins covering the areas of "Construction" (Booklet 4), "Health Services" (Booklet 5), "Manufacturing" (Booklet 6), and "Municipal Government" (Booklet 7).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

A concerted effort was made to locate and evaluate current relevant adult career education material. In addition to the materials available in the Adult Education library, a survey was made at the University of Southwestern Louisiana Materials Resource Center, the Lafayette Parish Career Education Center, the University of Southwestern Louisiana Dupre Library, the Louisiana Learning Special Education Resource Center and the Adult Performance Level Project of the University of Texas.

An annotated bibliography of current materials pertaining specifically to adult career education is included as Booklet 3 of the Dissemination Packet.

## DISSEMINATION

Adult educaters from the State of Louisiana and Region VI attended the Project Apple Core dissemination conference. Teachers and supervisors concerned with adult education, University of Southwestern Louisiana officials, U. S. Office of Education representatives, Region IV State Directors of Adult Education, members of the Louisiana State Department of Education, City of Lafayette officials and members of cooperating industries and agencies, participated in the conference activities. Participants reviewed the rationale behind Project Apple Core and obtained information and materials useful for implementing a similar program. The format of the Apple Core instructional program was reviewed and participants developed career related instructional material. Participants were very enthused about the conference and found the information in the conference very informative and practical. Details of the conference and an explanation of the activities are included in the "Dissemination Conference Brochure."

National dissemination was provided by the Center for Vocational Education in its publication, Case Studies of Selected Cooperative Adult Education Programs. The overall goal for the CVE's project sponsored by the U.S.O.E. was to identify, study and disseminate information about adult cooperative programs which are currently in existence in order to provide models and experience in an attempt to improve further collaborative efforts. Programs selected had to meet

parameters which were designed to focus on a specific population of disadvantaged adults participating in cooperative education programs. Approximately 15,000 identified persons were contacted in the effort, resulting in the acknowledgement of about 300 cooperative programs. Thirty programs were selected for telephone interviews; and of these, five were selected for site visits. Project Apple Core was selected as one of the five to receive a site visit. Explanations of the project are included in the Centers' products, A Partial Listing of Cooperative Adult Education Programs and Abstracts of Selected Cooperative Adult Education Programs. An extensive examination of Apple Core is also given in the publication Case Studies of Selected Cooperative Adult Education Programs.

Descriptions and explanations of the project in the CVE's publications, also in a bulletin from the U.S.O.E. entitled "Adult Performance Level Related Educational Products developed by Section 309 Special Projects," along with the showing of the Project at "Showcase 75" have provided exceptional means of dissemination for Project Apple Core.

"Showcase 75" was co-sponsored by St. Bernard and Jefferson Parishes, the diocese of New Orleans and the State Department of Education. Approximately 100 of the most outstanding, innovative educational programs in the nation were exhibited. Thirty-two states were represented at the meeting.

## RESULTS

Cooperation between agency administrators and supervisors is reflected in the release time (1 hour of work time off for 1 hour of the employees leisure time) and/or monetary reimbursement allowed to workers who participated in the program. The effects of relating curriculum to employment tasks were not immediate but retention and enthusiasm was good as students realized the greater opportunities for gainful employment which became possible with increases in competency.

The combination of individualized prescriptions and job related exercises produced sizable gains in educational levels among participants. Forty-nine participants were pre and post tested using the California Achievement Test. Results indicated that the average pre-test score was 6.5 and the average post-test score was 9.7. This represents an improvement of 3.2 grade levels for the workers who functioned at a level high enough to complete the C.A.T. Participants who were unable to take the C.A.T. were administered the informal inventories by the instructors at the beginning and end of the educational program. Results of the informal inventories cannot be taken as precise statistics but rather as a gauge to determine improvements among illiterates. Of the hundred or so participants who were informally tested averaged a gain of about 1/3 to 1/2 of a level as explained in section 4 of this report.

Information concerning employment status presents special problems in verification since job promotions are given dependent upon

multitudes of variables. Eight workers involved in the project and possibly more have received promotions which can be attributed partially to educational improvements.

This environment of cooperation serves as a catalyst and has been a factor in recruitment and retention of workers.